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AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE REVIEW OF THE ROLE OF THE
UNITED NATIONS IN THE FIELD OF DISARMAMENT

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 2ND MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 27 January 1976, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mrs. THORSSON (Sweden)

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The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

1. The CHAIRMAN said she had been informed that consultations on the election of officers were still under way in the regional groups. She appealed to the groups to expedite their consultations and suggested that the Committee should postpone consideration of item 3.
2. It was so decided.
3. Mr. LONGERSTAEY (Belgium) recalled that in his statement during the general debate at the thirtieth session of the General Assembly, the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs had said that all States which had renounced military nuclear capacity were entitled to call on all the nuclear-weapon Powers to fulfil their special responsibilities and take specific measures to put an end to the arms race. His delegation therefore hoped that all the nuclear-weapon Powers would attend the meetings of the Committee and take an active part in the discussions. His delegation was aware of the great differences of opinion on the substance of the problems relating to disarmament but considered that in the current situation all means of improving the chances for constructive dialogue should be explored. It believed that the work of the Committee was of great importance since it could and should constitute an important element in the over-all process leading towards disarmament.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

4. Mr. HAMILTON (Sweden), introducing on behalf of the sponsors of General Assembly resolution 3484 B (XXX), namely the delegations of Austria, Grenada, New Zealand, the Philippines, Romania, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Tunisia and Venezuela, the working paper reproduced in document A/AC.181/L.2, said that the purpose of the working paper was to indicate problem areas which in the opinion of the sponsors merited special attention during the review of the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament. He wished to stress that the views reflected in the paper were of a preliminary nature and were not in any way intended to prejudge the future substantive work of the Ad Hoc Committee or the nature of the communications which Governments had been invited to submit in accordance with operative paragraph 1 of General Assembly resolution 3484 B (XXX). The sponsors of the working paper reserved their right to put forward additional views and suggestions in the course of the review.
5. The limited time available for the review must be utilized as effectively as possible, and during the current organizational session the Committee should try to work out structural guidelines for the substantive work of the second session. The enumeration contained in the working paper was not meant to be exhaustive and was not designed to open up a discussion involving issues of substance. The sponsors were not therefore making any proposals with respect to the over-all question of how to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament.

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(Mr. Hamilton, Sweden)

6. The terms of reference of the Ad Hoc Committee were laid down in operative paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 3484 B (XXX); referring to subparagraph (a) of that paragraph, he stressed the importance of considering how the methods of work of the First Committee of the General Assembly could be improved. The sponsors believed that the First Committee had reached the upper limits of what it could reasonably deal with in one session with its current organization of work. The Committee could consider such questions as the relationship between the General Assembly and other United Nations bodies such as IAEA and the Ad Hoc Committees for the World Disarmament Conference and the Indian Ocean, the possible future role of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, and the assistance provided by the United Nations in multilateral and regional disarmament negotiations, which could be further developed and made more efficient. As had been clearly stated during the thirtieth session of the General Assembly, the review of the Organization's role in the field of disarmament should in no way interfere with negotiations on disarmament which were pursued in existing or future multilateral negotiating forums, and that consideration placed certain limits on the scope of the review. However, the relationship between the United Nations and the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (CCD) should definitely be considered, especially the arrangements under which the General Assembly entrusted tasks to CCD and the question of how CCD reported back to the General Assembly. In mentioning United Nations Secretariat facilities for in-depth studies of relevant disarmament matters, the sponsors were thinking particularly of UNITAR as an autonomous research institution within the United Nations system and of recognized research institutions outside the United Nations system.

7. With regard to paragraph 3 (b) of the resolution, the existing United Nations means of providing information on disarmament issues were clearly inadequate, and the sponsors believed that the work of the Ad Hoc Committee would be facilitated if it could receive the views of the Secretary-General on the possibilities of intensifying United Nations efforts to inform Governments and public opinion on armament and disarmament matters. In that connexion, the role of non-governmental organizations in enlightening public opinion should also be taken into account. As to paragraph 3 (c), the sponsors felt that the United Nations could, acting at the request of Governments, play a useful role. With regard to the implementation of disarmament agreements, it was obvious that the verification of compliance with such agreements was of great importance. Consideration could be given to a United Nations technical support function, the use of United Nations inspection teams, a United Nations role in harmonizing verification arrangements between different disarmament agreements, and also a role for the Organization in the compilation of data. In addition to the matters specifically mentioned in operative paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 3484 B (XXX), the sponsors felt that a review of the organization of the United Nations disarmament secretariat was called for and that all efforts should be made to ensure that it could adequately perform its functions. Since the Secretary-General had expressed great interest in the work of the Ad Hoc Committee, it would seem appropriate that he be invited to give his views and proposals on the subject-matter of the review, and a report by him would be of considerable value for the future work of the Ad Hoc Committee.

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(Mr. Hamilton, Sweden)

8. The sponsors were convinced of the need for agreement at the current session on a provisional agenda for the second session, at which the Committee must immediately concentrate its efforts on substantive matters. An introductory general debate in plenary would be of limited value in view of the extensive background material which by then would have been put at the disposal of Governments. In view of the short time available it would be desirable for the Committee at its second session to establish working groups of the whole which would report their findings to the Committee in plenary.

9. Mr. ROSSIDES (Cyprus) said it was very significant that for the first time an ad hoc committee of the whole membership of the United Nations had been set up outside the General Assembly to study the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament. It was particularly important that the United Nations would have an opportunity to seek ways of facilitating the work of inspection and control, which had always been a major stumbling block in efforts to achieve disarmament. The Secretary-General had stressed the need for a basic review of the whole process of disarmament and of the causes of the failure so far to achieve disarmament. In order to strengthen the role of the United Nations, it was necessary first to consider that role as defined by the Charter. The only specific mention of disarmament in the Charter was in Article 11, which made it clear that the question of disarmament and the regulation of armaments fell within the primary role of the United Nations, that of maintaining international peace and security. Disarmament was possible only in conditions of international peace and security. The Security Council had been established to promote those conditions; however, it was not enough for that body to adopt resolutions in accordance with the principle of the pacific settlement of disputes, and Chapter VII of the Charter therefore provided for measures of enforcement. Unless a threat of the use of collective force could be held over potential aggressors, there was no possibility of achieving international security and hence disarmament. General Assembly resolution 3484 B (XXX) provided for important measures aimed at improving the means available to the United Nations to promote international security, and in its 1970 Declaration on the Strengthening of International Security the General Assembly had reaffirmed the need to apply Chapter VII of the Charter. The adoption of that Declaration had shown that all but one of the Members of the United Nations considered that enforcement measures could and should be taken in order to establish international security and prevent aggression. Yet nothing had been done, and that was why the United Nations was ailing. Disarmament was impossible without international security and an end to international anarchy; in a world of anarchy, States were forced to arm themselves. That could be seen in the Middle East, for example. It was to be hoped that the discussions and resolutions of the United Nations would produce results and that the Security Council would adopt and enforce resolutions aimed at improving international security as provided for in the Charter.

10. The CHAIRMAN said that, in view of the importance of the matters entrusted to the Committee, it was desirable that the widest possible measure of agreement should be achieved on all issues. At the same time, it was important that all points of view should be adequately recorded in the Committee's report so that

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(The Chairman)

members of the General Assembly could give those views due consideration. Delegations should therefore try to achieve unanimous agreement on as many issues as possible on the understanding that the views of delegations and groups of delegations would be fully recorded in the report. She suggested that the Committee should follow that procedure.

11. Mr. DRISS (Tunisia) said he felt that the Committee could not adopt such a decision before seeing the direction its work would take. It should listen to the various proposals that were made and decide at a later stage on the most suitable method of work. He felt that the first decision of the Committee should be one calling on absent delegations to attend the session. It was common knowledge that some delegations did not regard the work of the Committee as important and that others thought its work was futile; however, the countries which did not possess nuclear arms could exert a moral influence, and those countries which did possess such arms should know that the members of the Committee had noticed the absence of certain of them from the session.

12. The CHAIRMAN said that, in view of the observations just made by the representative of Tunisia, it would perhaps be wise for the Committee to postpone any decision on its methods of work.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.

